

SYNOPSIS OF SMITH'S OWN STORY

JAN 11 1917 ✓

ALASKA WONDERS IN MOTION

On May the 10th, the little party left Seattle for Kodiak Island, Alaska, 2,000 miles by water. It was our purpose to go to the Island to hunt the great Kodiak Bear, known by all sportsmen as the largest and most ferocious bear of all bear to hunt. It has long been my ambition to photograph one of these big brown fellows charging the camera, to have him shot within a few feet of me so that I would be able to fill the screen with the on-rushing charge of an immense bear. I told Mr. W. A. Hillis, one of America's greatest big game hunters and who has probably bagged more big bear than any one hunter in this country, of my intentions and he agreed to accompany me to Kodiak Island for both the purpose of a hunt and securing moving pictures of the big brown bear in their native haunts. We met Governor Strong and his wife aboard the S. S. Alaska which we sailed on and they accompanied us as far as Juneau, the Capital, wishing us much success as the big steamer pulled out on its way to Seward where we took passage aboard the famous Dora.

Now, the Dora is about the oldest thing afloat in Alaska and has been making her trips monthly for the past thirty-eight years between Seward and Nome and as Captain Swanson told me, you could trace her by the paint she has left on nearly every rock along the coast to and from UnAlaska. I have endeavoured to picture the Dora and

her crew to give you a little idea of the hardships one has to undergo in order to reach Kodiak Island as the Dora is the only means of travel to the famous hunting grounds which is a trip of seasickness and torture (torture is the best word I know for it). After three days trip on the Dora, we arrived at Kodiak City where we made preparations for Uyak where we packed back into the mountains and to the bear country. Here we spent nearly thirty days of hardships in order to obtain the pictures which I have with me and which will prove and bear up the statement that I believe, we succeeded in getting a great bear picture and I also wish to say that this is the only moving picture that was ever made of a Kodiak Bear showing the real action of the bear being shot before the camera. Its hide measures over 12 feet in length which is not unusual for the Kodiak Bear often grows to the length of 14 feet and many of their tracks will measure from 16 to 17 inches in length.

The Kodiak Bear is unlike the big, brown bear of this country and will attack one on sight. To wound or come upon and surprise him means fight and no one but the hunters know the chances and dangers one has to undergo, in order to furnish a few minutes entertainment to the average theatre goer.

After getting our pictures at the Island, we again looked forward to the return of the Dora which was

five days late, having been on a sandbar some where on the Northern Coast. At 11:30 o'clock on the 12th day of June, we again took passage for our return, arriving at Seward on the 15th where the hunters left me and returned to their respective homes in the States.

I again took up my trip on June 19th, 1916, this time to the North, accompanied by my wife who had been awaiting my return at Seward. After making arrangements with an official of the Government Railway, we succeeded in taking pictures, by riding on a flat car, along the road from Seward to Mile 29, this being as far as the road was opened at that time of the year on account of the snow slides and glaciers of the winter before, the road from there to Mile 73 was practically washed away.

At Mile 29, we packed on horses over Moose Pass to Sunrise, a once prosperous frontier town of the olden, golden days, where we met the only occupant, Mr. Martin, whom I have pictured as the last man of 5,000 that once inhabited this now deserted village. I had come to Sunrise for the purpose of securing pictures of the Bore just about a half mile distant on Turnagain Arm, which is one of the world's greatest water phenomena, a tidal wave which sometimes crosses the Arm to the height of thirty-five feet and traveling at a terrific speed. Eleven days, we were camped at different points on the Arm before we accom-

plished our task, amid clouds of mosquitos which at times seemed impossible to endure. We scarcely cooked a meal but what they fell into the cooking by the hundreds as it was impossible to keep them out and it was up to us to eat them or go hungry, but one becomes accustomed to them after a few months in Alaska.

On the tenth day after having tried every available spot on the Arm in order to get a good picture of the Bore, I took my position on a sandbar about one-half mile from the shore and directly in the middle of the Arm. Soon the Bore could be heard coming at a distance of about eight miles—on it came rushing towards me at an enormous height. It is impossible for anyone to realize what an enormous body of water it takes to form this bore and which rushes up the Arm at probably twenty-five to thirty miles an hour. I held my position on the bar until it seemed the water was closing in around me, when at length, I heard my wife scream to me above the roar of the Bore that it was time to move. I quickly grabbed up my machine and ran for the rocky cliff where she was on lookout and when I reached safety the water was nearly to my knees; but I knew I had succeeded in getting what we had waited for and was satisfied. From here we chartered a gas boat and left for Anchorage a distance of about forty-five miles down this treacherous arm and on across the head of Cook's Inlet.

We arrived in Anchorage on the third of July, and the place was crowded with celebrators for the Fourth. We immediately made arrangements with the Chamber of Commerce to secure their assistance in obtaining scenes of this fastly growing little frontier town which has grown from a tent to a population of 10,000 in the past year.

After leaving Anchorage we again took up our trip over the Government Railroad which is building north to the Matanuska country and the coal fields belonging to the Government. The road runs through miles of wild cranberry swamps and will throw open a wonderful and prosperous section of the north for the homesteader who even now is pushing his way through to the magnificent land which lies there awaiting the man who seeks a fortune in the frontier. We got the foremen of construction, who were formerly employed by the Government on the Panama Canal, at work with their gangs and hustling on to the North and have shown the spirit of the quick, active railroad builder who spends a lifetime in blazing the way for humanity. There is only a few months in the summer that this work can go on as the snow begins to fall in September and often reaches the depth of from thirty-five to forty feet in the passes where this railroad intends to go.

I have pictured the natives in their villages in every day life who are worshippers and their churches of the North are the largest and best buildings they have and I was told by an American citizen that he believed the Russian Native or Eskimos about five religious holidays in the week, and I guess he is right for there was scarcely a day we were there but what they were dressed and prepared for services. I have photographed the priest and the interior of the church. I have shown how the natives bury their their dead and the little houses over the graves where the living place the dead's earthly belongings and also have shown native skulls found in trenches where they fought over one hundred years ago.

I wish to call to your attention specially to a trip which my wife and I made across Cook's Inlet, the roughest body of water in Alaska where the tide runs over six miles an hour, to the foot of Mt. Iamna, an active volcano where we went to photograph wild life. After several days of making arrangements, we succeeded in getting a small gas boat to make the trip some seventy-five miles.

At 2:30 in the morning which was just daylight, we left Kenai, a native village, and made our way as far as Kalgin Island where we had to lay to on account of a "Sowester", as the Sourdough calls it. This is the fear storm that generally lasts three days and it is impossible for any boat the size they have up there to endure it. On the third day, the water again became somewhat calm and we succeeded in making our way to the opposite shore. After finding a suitable camp, I directed the engineer to return home and call for us in fifteen days.

Soon my wife and I were alone in one of the wildest parts of Alaska with seventy-five miles of the roughest water in the world between us and the closest human being. We took up our camp in an old native smokehouse and prepared to watch for the different game, each day arising between 2:30 and 4 o'clock in the morning. Not having a boat with us, I found it necessary in order to obtain pictures of bear feeding on salmon to build a raft which we did and poled it up the little river running by our camp. Along the river banks the grass grows from six to seven feet in height. A bear can easily be from thirty to forty feet ahead of one and unless he stands up which is customary for him to do, it would be impossible to know he was there.

After going up the river some three-fourths of a mile, just ahead of us and to the left, I saw the grass move and an old she bear stood up above the tall grass. I ducked down and began pulling the raft in, which was in mid-stream where my wife was supporting the camera. Getting onto the raft, I poled it across and lodged it in some drift wood. At this, I noticed two little cubs playing in the mud about seventy-five feet ahead. They had not noticed us as yet and I began to crank. Finally one little cub ran against its mate, knocking it off into the river. Down the stream it came floating across to the raft. This was temptation too great to over-look and I reached out to grab the little fellow as the current was pulling him swiftly by. In doing so, I took ahold of the camera and the next thing I knew, camera and I were scrambling in the river together. Well, I did not see anything more of the bear and it was several hours before we rescued the machine and was on our way back to camp. I am sorry to say, I lost this film owing to it getting wet and it took me all the next day to get my camera apart and dried.

Time slips along very rapidly when one is interested in photographing wild life and not having a calendar with us, we had resolved to write down each day in order to keep track of the time, so we would know when to expect the boat back for us. One afternoon, we discovered our provisions were getting low and began to count the hours as to when the boat would call for us. As the days went by and our food was almost gone, the thought would flicker into our minds that perhaps something had happened to the engineer to cause the delay, as boat accommodations were practically depending upon this one man, and if

he should fail, we might be marooned for weeks and months without food. One day when I went for water, I noticed to my delight that the salmon had just begun to run in the little river so with a small trout hook we managed to keep hunger from the door.

While fishing one afternoon about four o'clock, we heard the chug of an Evinrude. We lost no time in making our way to the beach where we saw to our surprise a small river boat about to anchor. I could not believe they had come for us, as river boats have no business in crossing Cook's Inlet; but in a little while two men came ashore in a small dory. It was the engineer and with him was an old guide. We were amazed when they told us we had been there for twenty-five days. We had lost track of ten days somewhere in our figuring.

Now, my outfit was very heavy weighing about one thousand pounds, and there was a question in my mind whether it would be safe to venture out in this small boat with four people; but it was to be this boat or nothing, so after two day's delay, on account of a high wind, we pulled out from camp down the little river into the uncertain waters of Cook's Inlet.

A gentle breeze was coming in with the tide as we made our way towards Kalgin Island which we expected to reach on that tide and there we would wait until the next and then make it across to Kenai as it is impossible to go against the swift tide of Cook's Inlet in anything smaller than an ocean liner. Two hours brought us within sight of the small island and everything seemed favorable until we were within about a mile of the point upon which we had figured to land when the waves began to roll high-

er and the wind to blow harder. In a few minutes we were climbing mountains of water, catching now and then a glimpse of the land which seemed to be but a short way off. Two hours passed and we were still in the rough sea. I watched the face of the old guide, who had spent nearly thirty years in the North, grow more serious each moment. All of a sudden the Evinrude quit, we held our breath as the angry waves slapped us about at their will. My first question was what had happened to the engine. The engineer said the exhaust hose had slipped off owing to the toss and terrific height of the waves. When he reached over the back of the boat to replace the hose the sea washed in over him into our little open boat and it kept the guide busy bailing it out. The engineer rose from his position and gave the little crank a quick turn and to our delight it worked and the little boat began fighting the waves again. By this time, the tide had turned and we were drifting farther from land when the old guide went to the bow of the boat and placed the small dory crosswise to serve as a sail. After a fierce battle with wind and wave and after our engine had broken down several times, we managed to round the little point and landed in a little cove where we were protected somewhat from the gale. We were soaked to the skin which, however, was not unusual as we had often gone for weeks without a dry stitch of clothing on our backs.

After building a camp fire on the beach, we soon found that there was no water but slough water to drink, which swarmed with mosquitos, moose flies and no-see-ems. We remained there over night and to our dismay after three hours of trying, found we could not get the Evin-

rude to work. Finally we decided to row five miles to a fish trap where we remained for the night and repaired the engine.

On the following morning, it was raining again and looked as though it would continue to rain for a week, so being pressed for time, we decided to continue our trip on across the Inlet. After about five hours run, we were out of sight of the Island and caught in a dense fog. The sea again rolled high and it was for hours we traveled without knowing which way we were going; but through providence we kept to the right course and about six o'clock that evening we sighted land. It was well into the night when we finally landed again at Kenai.

From Kenai, we went to Seldovia where we took the Admiral Watson back to Seward and boarded the S.S. Mariposa for Cordova, one of the greatest copper producing sections of Alaska. It was our intention to take the train to Miles and Childs Glaciers which during that time of the year sluff off immense quantities of ice into the river affording a wonderful sight.

The railroad runs from Cordova to the famous Kennicott Copper Mines on the Copper River. This

railroad is mentioned by Rex Beach as being the Iron Trail of the North.

The million dollar steel bridge which crosses the river between the two glaciers is featured in his novel by that name, "The Iron Trail."

When we arrived at the glaciers the sun was shining brightly and it was fairly warm, in fact it was practically the first sunshine we had seen during our trip in the North. After making our camp, we located our machine on the opposite bank from Childs Glacier and awaited the ice falls which could be heard for miles when they fell with their terrific thunder. In order to obtain the pictures of the ice falling, one must watch closely for the small pieces to begin to break off, then begin to crank with the hopes of getting a big slide. The glacier is seventy-five miles in length, over four hundred feet in height and the face measuring three miles across. During the few weeks of summer when the glacier sluffs off, it is claimed that it sluffs off and moves forward forty feet per day. In the pictures that I have to offer, I show some tremendous slides although one can not realize the immensity of this body of ice or hear the deafening thunder

or feel the shock which goes with each fall from just looking at the pictures.

I was fortunate in securing a small gas boat and made my way through the ice fields to the face of Miles Glacier. This was the first time that a moving picture camera had been face to face with this gigantic wall of ice. It was no small undertaking to photograph the falling ice from a small boat, as each and every berg which falls off into the water (which is over 1,500 feet in depth) causes a huge swell or wave which we were compelled to pull away from at full speed in order to keep from being swamped. I have pictured a berg about the size of a small mountain which falls over and presents a magnificent sight. One that perhaps you will never have an opportunity of seeing again. In order to get this picture, I kept my camera focused on this berg for an hour and a half in a zero wind which blows from off the glacier.

Eight days were spent at the glaciers to obtain the pictures which I am very proud of and am quite sure to this date there has never been a motion picture made of a living glacier that will compare with them.

Written By

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